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Advancement of women

**Letter dated 1 March 2010 from the Permanent Representative
of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General**

I have the honour to convey to you information on the consistent implementation of international mechanisms on women's rights in the Republic of Uzbekistan (see annex).

I would appreciate if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 62.

(Signed) Murad Askarov
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan



Annex to the letter dated 1 March 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Consistent Implementation of International Mechanisms on Women's Rights in the Republic of Uzbekistan

In 2010, the General Assembly is observing the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, designed to improve the status of women and ensure their rights as the cornerstone of sustainable social development and peace in the twenty-first century.

Uzbekistan is meeting its international human rights treaty obligations with consistency and resolve. To that end, active and constructive dialogue is ongoing with the United Nations treaty bodies and with the Charter organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations. Timely submission of national reports and implementation of treaty committee recommendations are deemed highly important.

Over the past two years, Parliament has ratified the following seven international human rights treaties: the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty; the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict; the United Nations Convention against Corruption; the Minimum Age Convention of the International Labour Organization (ILO); and the ILO Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

National plans of action have been elaborated and are being implemented based on treaty body recommendations to implement the recommendations of the Committee against Torture, the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Committee on the Rights of the Child; the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

On 11 December 2008, the national report of Uzbekistan was reviewed as part of the universal periodic review. The report of Uzbekistan was approved at the tenth session of the Human Rights Council.

In keeping with established procedure, a national plan of action to give effect to the recommendations of the Human Rights Council on the outcome of the universal periodic review of Uzbekistan was adopted in 2009 and is being implemented. One section of the plan is dedicated to ensuring and protecting the rights of women. Over 50 State bodies and non-governmental organizations are involved in that work.

The Interdepartmental Working Group to study the situation with respect to the observance of human rights by law enforcement agencies, headed by the Ministry of Justice, is responsible for monitoring implementation of the national plans of action.

The Government has also adopted a national plan of action to implement ILO Conventions Nos. 138 and 182, on the minimum age for employment and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, which provide for measures to enhance legislation and to monitor fulfilment of international obligations.

Uzbekistan also attaches great importance to implementation of General Comments 3 and 6 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Concluding Observations of CEDAW.

To this end, broad awareness-raising and educational activity on human rights is being carried out. Over 120 of the most important international human rights law instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, have been translated into Uzbek and published in large print runs, in close cooperation with such international partners as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), ILO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Learning materials and compilations have been published in the Uzbek, Russian and Karakalpak languages, with support from international organizations.

More than 20 legal periodicals and human rights journals are published in Uzbekistan. The mass media give priority coverage to issues related to the protection of human rights, liberties and legal interests. A competition is held for Uzbek journalists on the topic of how gender equality is reflected in the mass media. Women's newspapers and magazines, including such titles as *Oila*, *Saodat*, *Lady*, *Bekazhon*, *Bella Terra*, *Sanam*, *Duganazhon*, *Kizbibi*, *Sugdiana* and others are extremely popular.

The general recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women have been translated into Uzbek.

Measures are under way to continue improving women's rights education. The curricula of preschools, primary and secondary schools, specialized high schools, professional training institutions and institutions of higher education as well as continuing education institutions for educators, medical specialists, social workers, journalists, lawyers, law enforcement officials and judges all include study of women's rights issues and of the provisions of the Convention and national law.

Women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are very actively involved in informing the public about gender issues, investigating and monitoring women's rights issues and providing expert assessments of national law from a gender perspective.

A survey conducted by the Public Opinion Centre indicates that the number of requests to women's organizations which were favourably resolved in 2008 was five times greater than 2005. This confirms data on the effectiveness of their work. In 2005, according to women's replies, women's organizations provided valuable assistance in resolving the problems of 11.5 per cent of poll respondents, while in 2008, this indicator had risen to 62.2 per cent.

In accordance with the Concluding Observations of CEDAW, which have been widely disseminated, many awareness-raising and educational events have been held as part of the preparation of the fourth periodic report on women's rights, at the initiative and with the participation of NGOs, enabling them to make an increased contribution to and play a greater role in resolving problems related to awareness and implementation of women's rights in all areas of life.

Uzbekistan highly values and supports all United Nations initiatives aimed at ensuring gender equality, eliminating gender-based violence and discrimination and strengthening the role of women in all areas of life. If these goals are not achieved it will be impossible in today's world to ensure the dynamic development of States, the maintenance of their socio-economic and political stability and the elimination of poverty, disease, illiteracy, violence, crime, extremism, intolerance and other problems and threats.

A priority objective of State policy in Uzbekistan in the social sphere is the steady enhancement of the role of women in the family, society and the State, ensuring legal, economic and social protection for women, as well as the creation of all necessary conditions for their comprehensive development.

This policy is, of course, based on the traditions and values of the people of Uzbekistan, where women have always played a significant role in strengthening the institution of the family, raising and educating children and preserving a healthy emotional atmosphere and principles of responsibility and tolerance in society. Family is one of the most important Uzbek values. As President Karimov has said, "Developing the institution of the family along with other important social structures and raising its status are priorities of State policy, because the health of the family is the underpinning of society. Only in a healthy family can a healthy child be born. And a healthy generation is the country's future, the strength that will shape tomorrow."

State policy on the protection of women's rights in Uzbekistan is being applied in several key areas:

1. Systematic review and assessment of the status of women, the enjoyment of their rights and the improvement of their role in the family and society and in the management of social and public affairs.
2. Development and adoption of measures to address problems that women may encounter in various spheres of social life; support for women's education; assistance with job-seeking and employment; and development of various forms of entrepreneurship for women.
3. Enforcement of regulatory acts for the protection of women's rights and interests and the protection of mothers and children. The enactment and implementation of the Additional Allowances for Women Act, the Presidential Decree on additional measures for strengthening the social protection of women and a number of other regulatory acts aimed at eliminating discrimination against women have played a major role in the advancement of women in Uzbekistan.

One of the main steps that Uzbekistan took after gaining independence was to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1995). Women's rights are also guaranteed through its accession to other international instruments such as, inter alia, the ILO Convention concerning the

Reduction of Hours of Work to Forty a Week and Maternity Protection Convention, the Vienna Declaration (1993), and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). In 2008, Uzbekistan ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and also adopted an Act to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which is making a significant contribution to eradicating that problem at the international level.

4. Implementation of State programmes adopted in connection with the Year for the Protection of People's Interests, the Year of the Family, the Year of the Healthy Generation, Mother and Child Year, Women's Year, Health Year, Youth Year and Rural Development and Services Year. Within the framework of these programmes, a series of specific measures have been taken to advance the status of women, enhance their role in the family and in State and social structures and improve the system for the protection of their legal, social and spiritual interests.

The year 2010 has been proclaimed in Uzbekistan as the Year of the Harmoniously Developed Generation, which will further strengthen the role of women in raising a generation of physically healthy and spiritually mature young people and helping boys and girls take up their proper place in society.

5. Development and implementation of measures aimed at encouraging women to become more politically and socially active and supporting the involvement of women's NGOs in the social and political life of the country as well as in the international women's movement.

6. Expanding women's active participation in political activities. Women are broadly represented in the power structures and throughout the system of economic and political leadership in Uzbekistan. Under the regulations, women are eligible for election as one of the deputy prime ministers of Uzbekistan, as the chair of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakstan and as *khokims* (regional chief administrators) in the oblasts and the city of Tashkent.

In Uzbekistan, there is a 30 per cent quota for women candidates to the Oliy Majlis (Parliament). Women account for 15 per cent of the members of Senate (the upper house of Parliament), 18 per cent of the Legislative Chamber of Parliament and 15.2 per cent of local representative bodies. In the December 2009 parliamentary elections, 33 of the 150 deputies elected — or 22 per cent — were women. A woman has once again been elected speaker of the Legislative Chamber.

Over 20 per cent of employees in Uzbekistan's judicial system are women. A woman has held the position of Ombudsman in Uzbekistan since 1995. In 2007, for the first time in the country's history, a woman was nominated as a candidate for President. All of that is clear evidence of the advancement of women in Uzbekistan.

7. Women's active participation in business development and in the economic life of the country as a whole. As at the beginning of the current decade, the shares of women's and men's participation in the economy stood at 44 per cent and 56 per cent, respectively.

Employment for women and their participation in socio-economic activities are major factors in strengthening women's independence and giving them an active role in society and in life. To that end, the Government has developed local employment programmes for women, including annual job creation in each region; meeting women's employment needs through the development of small business, the

service sector and home-based work; upgrading and streamlining the structure of women's employment in rural areas; providing credit on preferential terms to small businesses that employ mainly female labour or are managed by women; and organizing training for women on how to run a business.

One of the main prerequisites for this broad involvement of women in social and economic activities is a literacy rate among women in Uzbekistan — over 99 per cent — that is high even by the standards of the world's most developed countries, as well as a non-discriminatory approach to women's education and professional training. Nearly 40 per cent of all professionals and research personnel in Uzbekistan are women, and women make up a significant percentage of senior management in the country's scientific and educational institutions.

In the words of Uzbekistan's leader, Islam Karimov, the protection of women's interests and the comprehensive advancement of women are among the principal tasks and priorities of the State of Uzbekistan. Giving effect to these priorities will help foster effective socio-economic reform in the country and bring about fundamental democratic change in all spheres of life. Uzbekistan has made significant progress in its socio-economic and political development, in education, health care and gender equality, and towards the achievement of the other Millennium Development Goals. All of this is directly related to the State's concern for the welfare of women. Uzbekistan will continue to support all United Nations initiatives in favour of women's interests by developing further cooperation both with the relevant United Nations entities and structures and with other countries and international organizations.